

POETIC COMMENTARIES

By Brian Chung

2016

In this book is a collection of 36 long and short original poems of diverse forms and themes. From poetic commentaries of the works of Edward Hopper and Atkinson Grimshaw to prose poetry and Buddhist inspired works, there is surely something for everyone. As the author, I would like to make clear that all the poems herein have been released into the Public Domain.

What others have said:



[Maurice Rigoler](#)

Date: 10/8/2016 11:35:00 AM

You are a man of perception and insight, a rare type these days. Thank you for reading my work, Best to you in your writing endeavors. / M 



[alicyana](#)

OCTOBER 13, 2016
AT 3:27 PM

Wooooow beautiful words with beautiful paintings, it's same as matching couple ❤️

Och. . How I wish I could simply breathe poetry 😊

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[Probir Gupta](#)

Date: 9/24/2016 5:56:00 AM

Well written indeed ... 



[Silent One](#)

Date: 9/26/2016 2:23:00 PM

True words.. Well written Brian.. 



Our Appian Way

Rolling beyond the oblivion
Reaching over the horizon
Mile upon mile of paved way
Sees me drive off and away

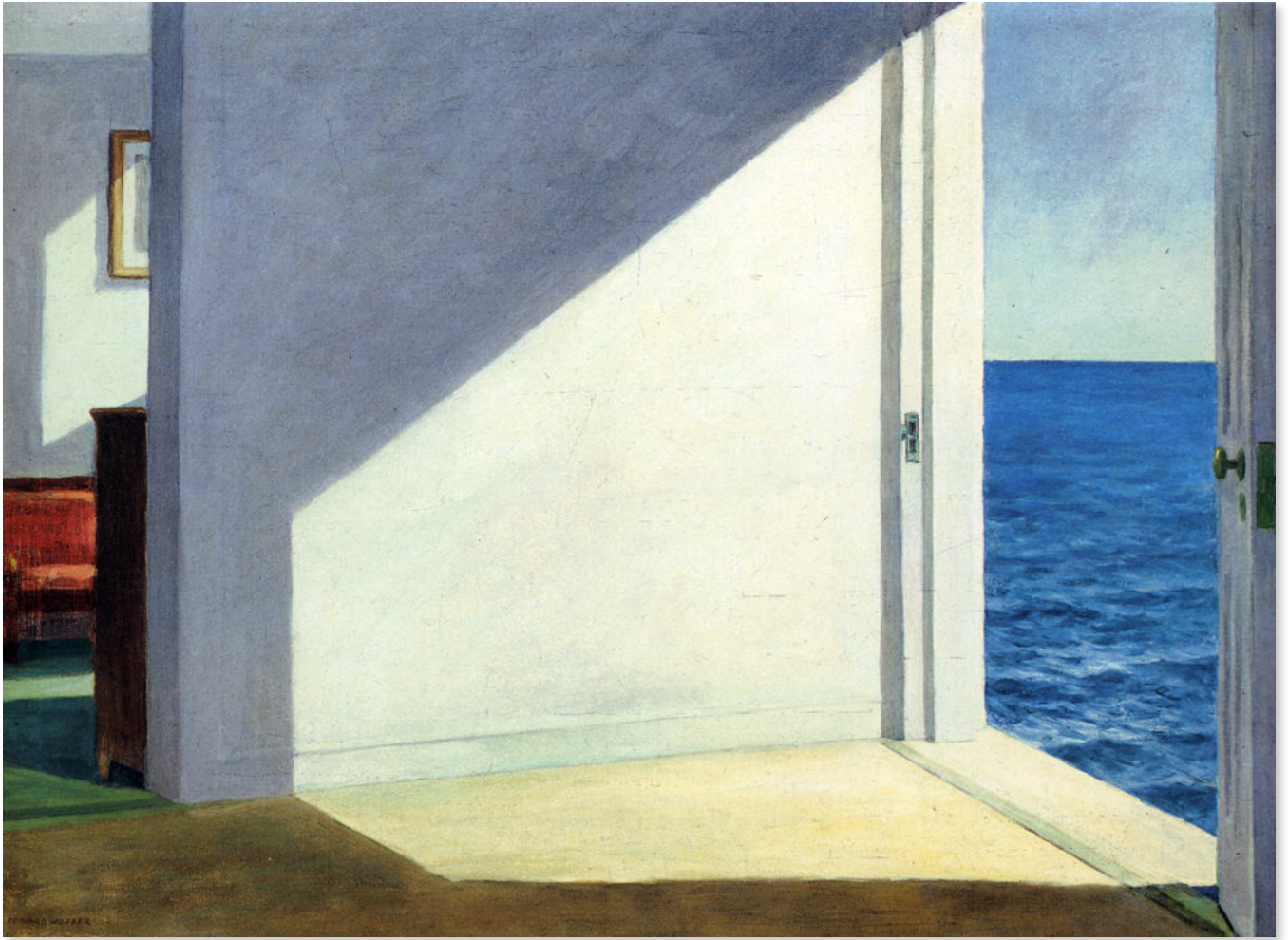
The wheels spin tirelessly around
Allowing me to glide over the open lands
Across fields and prairies without bounds
On a highway of four wide and mighty lanes

And as the cool breeze parted at my face
As I sped forward in both night and day
In rain, storm, fog, shine or seasonal grace
I felt forever grateful for this Appian Way!



A Bitter Delight

Midnight Coffee
Sweet and creamy
A bitter delight
Amidst the night



Will You Slumber On?

When the moon retires its gleam,
And sunlight shines upon the dew,
Do you rise from bed anew?
Or slumber on in a waking dream....



Stoic Eyes

Her fair form adrift in reverie
A wealful delight for my eyes
Though my gazes are as deep as
Her musings and daydreams
I hide them along with all my stoic yearnings
In the shades of the gleaming light



Morning Warmth

When the sunlight basks my little hearth
It fills my weary soul
With a shimmer of hope
And as rays illumine my room with warmth
I arise anew ; reborn once more



Night Shift

Evening falls but my
Day has just begun, for
I have the night shift, and
Whilst the world lumbers to
Slumber, dream and sleep
I work in blissful peace
To the tune of chirping
Crickets and cool breezes
Softly ruffling the leaves...



Dawn

Twilight before sunlight
The early morning
Cosy and eerie
Rises to greet
A world silent and still



Gazing at the Fading Sun

As afternoon fades and gives way to night
We sit on our doorstep and gaze away
At the golden sun falling from the sky
And as the last beams shine on our faces
Our minds mirror in unison the fair
Splendrous sun retiring from up high



A Stranger's Warmth

I gaze out my window and see the same
Handsome house of someone I could not name.

A fair home adorned by a mellow lamp
That comes to life when day fades away and
Turns to cold autumn night. Though so simple,
The light which glows from his window sill and
Flows out to illumine the louring night mist,
Moves me in ways words fail to illustrate.

We are strangers who know each other not,
But by mere chance, his light has warmed my heart.



A Nest to Ponder In

Night's shadow lours upon the world
And the streets are silent like the
Netherworld without a single
Morning soul to be seen or heard.
But amidst the dimness is a lone
Lit nest serving toffee flavored coffee,
And when the jukebox sings "Do I Worry",
Wistful nighthawks gather to ponder
From midnight to twilight, minding
Only their lonely aloof thoughts,
And to be adrift in surreal reverie,
During this moonlit lull when the
Sun shines bright but in dreamworld.

Note: "Do I Worry" is an Ink Spots song.



The Merchant Republic

This ancient windswept land, this venerable city, forged in sea trade and tempered by age. A teeming bosom of art, and mother of merchant pioneers, poets and painters. A shadowy shimmering pearl adorning the edge of the silver sea. Within its dreamy docks and stately streets, emanates an unseen warmth in the bleak coldness, a cosy brightness beneath the glooming louring clouds. Home to a quiet people with stoic features and keen minds, old lineages and cultured brilliance, blissfully adrift in the weal and bounty of Poseidon. Thus, whenever thy ship sails by, be sure to set foot upon its piers and prosperous promenade, saunter in its glass covered groves, taste the delicacies of the salty sea, waltz within the annual masked ball, and delight in a harpsichord's tune at the marbled conservatory hall.



The Buddha's Lamp

Flicker, flicker
Little lamp
Shining bright
Offering light
Golden glow
Guiding souls
From woe to weal
And foe to friend
From dark to light
And low to high !

Now and Then in Fair Fallhill

Slowly, my ferryboat drifted closer to my dear old home. Before me, the stony peaks of familiar mountains arose from the blue hue, and just as cool salty breezes blew across my face, the childhood memories rushed back into my heart – moving me to shed several wistful teardrops.

But, as I approached the docks of Fallhill harbor, it dawned upon me that age had punished the city as it has my body. The neat cobblestones had cracked and sprouted weeds. The piers were rotting and the paint flaking and peeling. I ascended the worn stone steps and onto the grand promenade, where in my youth, young elegant couples strolled with all their finery – gaiting as they admired the many fine boutiques – spending afternoons of leisure under the canopies of the open cafes. Alas! Those days are gone.

The charming stone facades were tainted by watermarks, and the grand Hanseatic townhouses were decayed and dilapidated. The bay windows were broken and boarded ; the fashionable shops and restaurants had closed, though some clung to life and flogged their fading majesty to the odd passerby.

I then made my way to the Gallery of Fine Arts. In its day, it was much renowned and eager artists from far and wide begged to have but a fleeting moment within its gilded halls.

But when I walked into its spacious atrium, the vaulted cast iron and glass roof was shattered and dripping with rust. Bronze statues lay broken upon the floor, and the many oak panels and oil paintings were worn and crooked. Not a soul could be seen, except the old curator, who sat idly by and stared forlornly into the dimly lit halls.

I sighed and left to visit the Thrice Tiered Gardens. Built upon a sloping hill on the banks of the azure Vesbyrn river, it was a marvel that had no rival. I still reminisce the long summers I spent amongst its many fragrant blossoms and blooming arbors. How I sat there, amidst a world of my own, gazing at the magnificent view of the faraway sea, admiring the sun as it rose and the moon as it glowed.

But now, it is overgrown, with broken marble vases strewn across the uneven paths. Colorful weeds and vines of every kind now smother the withered orchards and the crumbling pavilions. Only the timeless view remained.

Evening falls and I sit in my favorite corner cafe. Though the years have taken its toll, it is still open. I drink my plum wine and sigh and say to myself, "Love and glory cannot be kept forever, and must be parted with!"

One Man's Paradise is Often Another's Perdition

One man's paradise is often another's perdition,
And from prejudice arise people's positions.
All seek selfish weal, to shift every woe
Upon those they deem as detestable foes.
Duty and Sacrifice so often prated by
Those beyond the burdens of their lies.
If both men and women could but empathize
And see another's pain as their own torment,
They would rein in their entitlements
And make allowances for the needs of others.
For when all place first the comfort of another,
Who could possibly be left wanting or enraged
In a world remade in kindly heavenly image?

The Mid Autumn Festival

Night falls and the mirror moon illumines the
heavenly starry skies with gleaming ivory beams.
Shiny and mellow, a splendrous silver orb,
the delight of the night sky!

It is the evening of the 15th, and the cool air is fair,
filled with chirping crickets and reason for revelry.
Kinfolk gather to rejoice within the warmth of their hearth,
toasting with mulled wine ; munching moon cakes!
But today is also sacred and solemn, and offerings
must be made to Heaven and Earth. Thus, scented
sandalwood incense are lit ; apricots and pomelos are placed
upon lacquer plates before the plaques of divine gods,
and dear ancestors.

Away from laughter and lanterns, besides a quiet lake,
and under a lofty peak, sits a sagacious couple. She smiles
and plays the zither, sending with each skillful stroke,
soft and serene sounds that grace the ethereal night's air.
As for him, he stands pleased under the pavilion, inhaling
the sweet scents of blooming peach blossoms, admiring
the moon as it rose and the beauty of his wife before the
bright shimmer of moonlight.

Content, he recites a poem:

“The moon is luminous,
Heaven is harmonious,
Autumn has come,
And Summer is gone,
I toast my cassia wine,
To a harvest most fine!”

Within the House of Lake Walensee

Mist glides above the pristine waters,
Divine clouds rest gently upon the peaks,
Of fair and turquoise Walensee.

Night falls and moon-glow illumines,
The everblooming and serene hills,
Of clear and lofty Walenstadt.

Hidden within the lush green flora,
Leaning against the majestic forest,
Is the little house by Lake Walen.

An elegant cottage with cosy lamp light,
Flowing outwards into the air of night,
That wreathes the pearl of St.Gallen.

Within, a gramophone brings forth
The mellow sound of a slow lyric waltz,
And the graceful couple of Walen house,

A flaxen lady and her gentle, stoic man,
Delight as they gait softly in warm embrace
To the still and beauty of fair Walensee!

Beyond the Yonder

What lies beyond,
Far over yonder?
What? You wonder,
And you ponder.

Is it lush like dreams?
A land esteemed?
Or arid and bleak,
Lacking even a creek?

Provisions you gather,
Prepare to wander,
Onwards you saunter,
Go forth and discover!

The Secret Place of the Most High

The sun illumines a land in precarious peace,
There was a time when heroes walked with ease,
But now, complacency reigns shamelessly,
And the distracted people take weal for granted.

The decaying dynasty finally crumbles and tumbles,
The peaks and gorges are once again scorched,
By the scourge of purges and the roar of warlords,
Stately cities are reduced to ashes as they clash.

For the fortunes of men forever wax and wane,
Burning ambition paves the way to perdition,
With towering arrogance, they brandish lances,
Charging with fury, seeking eternal glory!

The hooves of their bolting steeds tread rudely,
Upon the hopes and dreams of common rubes,
Lauding themselves as the rising ascendancy,
They conquer and scheme without empathy.

Amidst such strife, men and women cry and sigh,
They brood as they are driven into servitude,
Streaming away from the ruins of their hearth,
They weep over fading memories of bygone mirth.

As for me, I am well aware of the follies of men,
I sought not pomp, power or to lord over and reign,
Thus, God rewarded me with an oasis in the chaos,
A quiet utopia of everblooming peach blossoms.

Of clear skies, lush gardens and teal colored lakes,
Day and night, I gait gently to the tune of a flute,
And compose poems while gazing at silky moonglow,
Everyday, I delight in this wondrous Eden of my own!

The faith and virtues I so steadfastly accrued,
Have freed me from the bane of men's feuds,
For I now dwell in the secret place of the Most High,
And abide in the shadow of the Almighty!

The Great Learning

Stilling avarice with abstinence,
He recovers profound innate wisdom,
Gaining sincerity most genuine,
And a righteous heart of prudence,

As proper mind exudes propriety,
He harmonizes hearth and household,
And steers his state away from woe,
Proving himself fit for purple dignity.

This is the Sea-Daunting and Promising

Shimmering sea, glimmering waves
Glistening waters, mirroring moon-glow
Beyond the beaches, coral lagoons
Mellow boroughs, dotting the shore

Rising sun, peaking through the sky
Day has arrived, ousting dark night
Merchant adventurers, sail forth to venture
The deep blue hue, revealed to the crew

Vast is its reach, and cool the salty breeze
Violent are its storms, and mighty its depths
Haunted by sirens, whose tunes take wing
Amid broken dreams, and forlorn hope

Morbid castaways, adrift or ashore
Gaze upon the horizon, dazed and confused
Perhaps they seek, an island of nymphs,
Just like Odysseus, or so they think...

This is the sea, daunting and promising
Poseidon's wonders, for all to see!

Laments of the Forever Unborn

I am a child of no years,
Of no form, only tears.
I was once to be born,
But from womb I was torn.

Not a person, or so they say,
But I have a soul, and hopes too.
Alas! The wings of my dreams,
Have been clipped by cruel whim.

And now, silent I linger,
In a cold, dark corner,
Pondering upon the life
That could have been.

Mother! All I wanted was to be filial,
To make your years convivial,
To be your sun when life's winter sets,
Did I really....deserve not to be?

My Dream, My Yearning

My dream, my undying yearning,
Is to dwell in a dreamworld of my own,
In a misty city amid teal lakes and white peaks,
Filled with clear waters, lush groves and majestic pines,
With marvelous minimalist halls of mid-century design.

I seek to read in lofty libraries and muse in art galleries,
To be adrift in abstract beauty and a Baroque adagio,
To lounge in cafes filled with creative reverie, and
Elegant silent patrons lost in their daydreams.

I yearn to spend each sublime evening admiring starry skies
From under a domed skylight, to enjoy creamy coffee upon a
Lakeside veranda, amid dew drops and cool blissful breezes,
Gazing at the sun as it rises beyond the skyline.

Life is But a Slide Show

Craving for an illusion
Chasing after phantoms
Life is like moving pictures
One slide after another
Played in rapid succession
Making us but a series of stills

King Yama is the director
Our karma is the script
And the spirits who record
Our every virtue and vice
Are the writers of our role
Of our every weal or woe!

Thus, what is worth clinging to ?
A still, an image, an illusion?
Ponder deeply and look within:
Which single slide is truly you?

A Modest Man

He grew his own food,
And sewed his own clothes,
He owed no one,
But shared with everyone.

He rejected larceny,
Refrained from intrigue,
Spurned lust, lies and malice,
Spoke only kindness
And practiced but prudence.

He was a modest man... are we?

May the Forlorn Find Home

May the forlorn find warm hearth,
A place of their own upon this Earth,
A cosy delight beneath the skies,
A nest in the night with mellow lamp light.

May the Deaf Hear

Let deaf ears resound
Upon splendorous sound,
With tunes so melodic
And a song of lyrics,
May they hear graceful notes
Dancing in their ears,
Bringing forth joyous tears!

Tell Me Truly, For I Yearn to Hear

To you I humbly inquire:
What is your heart's desire?
Your greatest delight?
The crowning achievement
Of your entire Life?
What moves you to tears?
Brings out your smile?
Pleases your ears?
And sprinkles upon you
the sweetest dreams?
Tell me truly, For I yearn to hear!

The Bane of Able Men is a Blind and Crippled World

The bane of able men, is a blind, deaf and crippled world,
Lacking in discernment, decorum and sincerity,
Wanting genuine gratitude, profound wisdom and propriety,
Choking on complacency, and adrift in a sea of avarice,
Void of foresight, and ignorant of looming calamity,
Full of men greedy for mere gain like a mantis stalking a
Careless cicada, oblivious of the oriole behind!

Sighing, the sagacious seclude themselves and bide their time,
Waiting for better times.....

Inspired by Zen

May all my hopes and fears dissolve into timeless truth,
May they melt away and trouble be no more,
Let my inner mind gleam, and beam wisely and bright,
And my heart abide neither here nor there but
Arise from anywhere and nowhere!

-Poem inspired by the Shurangama and the Diamond Sutras (of the Zen School)

Mother Earth Forever Warm Hearth

Mother Earth forever warm hearth,
The soil that gives birth to all mirth,
Long-lasting, all embracing and boundless,
Everblooming and always borderless,
A wealful delight ; a virtuous birthright.

The Resolve of Amitabha:

A liberal translation of the poem found in Upsaka Xia Lian Ju's Infinite Life Sutra

I will rise far beyond the yonder
And cruise upon the unsurpassed
If my vows won't come to pass
Then from Bodhi I will wander

I seek to be the greatest patron
And give alms to the forsaken
To let all beneath the skies
Have peace in their long nights

Arising from virtuous roots
Accomplishing the Bodhi-fruit
If I achieve wisdom most high
I shall be known as Infinite Life

Beings who heed my name
And arrive in my Buddha-domain
Will have Sagely golden brilliance
And all the features of excellence

With the Greatest Compassion
I uproot the many passions

Of every order of beings
Endowing virtue most purifying

I shall shine my Wisdom Light
Across the ten quarters bright
Quelling the three dark taints
And pardoning those attainted

I offer salvation to those in perdition
I subdue all turbid emotions
I help open the Wisdom-eye
And grant bodies of shining light

I wall off every woeful path
And pave the way to wealful mirth
I mine the Dharma-treasure
And distribute merits with pleasure

I seek to be wise like the Buddha
To be kind like the Tathagata
To be the teacher of all devas,
To shoulder the universe like Atlas

To preach the Dharma like Simha
To save those mired in karma
To perfect each and every vow
And give Buddha-hood to all

If my vision is proved true
The whole universe will be moved
Heavenly deities shall fete
And scatter flowers like confetti !

The Wheel of Fortune Spins Away But Rarely Your Way

For every man that walks the Earth,
There are umpteen scores of envious souls,
Jealous of the privilege they now hold,
For nothing is rarer than human rebirth!

“If the soil clutched in the palm of my hand
Are the men and women who walk this land,
Then even all the dirt of the world entire
Are dwarfed by the souls seeking such a chance!”

Shakyamuni Buddha.

Therefore, a life of virtue and good deeds
Is a message all of humanity must heed,
For this human life is short and scarce,
And if wasted, another come from whence?

Thus the sutras state:
Good or evil in this realm of men
Will yield eon spanning bliss or bane,
And as the Wheel of Fortune spins away,
Millions of souls hoping for rebirth as men,
Despair when it does not turn their way!



*Amitabha's aurulent stature and splendorous appearance,
Shines forth augustly ; marvelous without peer.
His fair brows wreath five Sumeru peaks,
Purple eyes as bright and clear as the Four Great Seas.*

*From his luminous halo arise Buddhas countless,
And a host of Bodhisattvas vast and boundless.
His 48 Great Vows redeem beings of any rank,
Ferrying them in ennead orders to the other bank.*

Largesse for the Loyalist: The Dangers of a World Adrift in Avarice

Here is the Secret Monologue of Many who are Greedy:

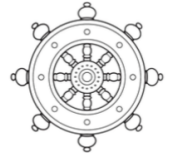
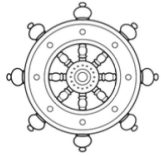
"I am loyal, a servant most true!
That is until...I am not paid in full,
Then I turn to tattle, and to trash
Your trust with treason, high and foul!
As dreaded foes tread freely upon you,
I will make merry in your misery!"

"You may hate me, but faith is not free,
Loyalty demands largesse, and a fee!
For the times are adrift in seas of greed,
Full of subtle hints, hidden in sly smiles:
You there! Heed and hear: Pay me well
Or prepare to be quelled!"

Poem inspired by Mencius' important exhortation on the dangers of profit culture:

Mencius had an audience with King Hui of Liang. The king said, "....You must have some ideas about how to benefit my state."
Mencius replied, "Why must Your Majesty use the word 'benefit' All I am concerned with are the benevolent and the right. If Your Majesty says, 'How can I benefit my state?' your officials will say, 'How can I benefit my family,' and officers and common people will say, 'How can I benefit myself.' Once superiors and inferiors are competing for benefit, the state will be in danger. When the head of a

state of ten thousand chariots is murdered, the assassin is invariably a noble with a fief of a thousand chariots, When the head of a fief of a thousand chariots is murdered, the assassin is invariably head of a sub-fief of a hundred chariots. Those with a thousand out of ten thousand, or a hundred out of a thousand, had quite a bit. But when benefit is put before what is right, they are not satisfied without snatching it all. By contrast there has never been a benevolent person who neglected his parents or a righteous person who put his lord last. Your Majesty perhaps will now also say, 'All I am concerned with are the benevolent and the right. Why mention 'benefit?' ''



The Light of Amita

**Upon the earth and within men's hearth
All wander to labor when Helios beams
And slumber and dream to the gleam of Selene**

**Above Meru's height are devas lofty and bright
Their wealful delight are theirs by virtuous right
They glide beyond the skies in their very own light**

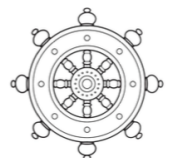
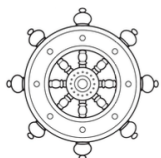
**But there is a brilliance more harmonious
Much fairer and many times more luminous
Than all the resplendence of heaven combined:**

**The Light of Amita hath warmth and enlightens
It heals the afflicted and comforts the frightened
It eases the mind and sees the heart to brighten**

**Boundless, everlasting and all-embracing
It shines forth augustly and upon those passing
Freeing them from falsity and Yama's lashing**

**His golden stature, peerless and splendid
Behold his Pure Land! Wondrous and marvelous
Adorned with gems and devoid of the heinous**

**Thus, chant his name and have faith in his Land
Vow to arise in the Buddha-land most grand
To be amongst the beings redeemed by his hand**





Turning and Tumbling: The Gloomng Samsara

Turning and burning and tumbling
The Wheel of Death and Rebirth
Ceases not and rumbles onwards
As deluded souls forever cycle and circle
Dear friends become foul foes
Precious love turns into towering hate
And former rivals become kinfolk

Driven by greed by lust and by hatred
The karma for Hell and Ghost and Beastly
Rebirth are thus wrought and brought about
Stumbling and weeping and sighing
Evil souls roam in penury and misery
For eon after eon and life after life
Crushed by sins with no end in sight

Then, before them, a breach, a ray of light!
Human rebirth is begotten once more

A chance, they say, is as rare as
A palmful of soil placed next to all
The earth and the dirt of the world entire
Yet few are Sages while scores of souls
Drown amidst their own avarice

For every act there will be an echo
For every debt there is a date
And as the Samsara turns and tumbles
All and everyone shall have their due
For karmic deeds and debts and credits
Dating back to b'fore time immemorial
And so, as the Samsara wheels and whirls

Some become sheep and cattle of karmic foes
To repay deeds now rued with flesh and labor
Others are reborn as frivolous heirs
To spend riches stolen from them in lives prior
The Ancients say that to be man and wife
For but a day, is the fruit of a century
Of causes and conditions and karma

Lord Yama's lash is fierce and frightful
Karmic reckoning is rarely trifling
Yet men tread and trample upon the precepts
Murdering and masquerading as they plunder
Pining for profit during the day
Quaffing wine and vying for vice at night
They are sly even in their slumber

Alas! Such ingrates are thicker than granite
Fickle and foolish, they gloat over gluttony
Blind to karma and its comeuppance
They are rapacious rabble who crave for weal
While ignorant of the fact that only merit
Can enable their dreams to take wing
And that all woes are withered by patience

Heaping up sins higher than mountains
They squander their short human years
On desire and vanity and vainglory
And then they turn and tumble and slip
Back into the evil abyss of abject chastisement
Swapping their human bodies for
Gaunt ghostly forms and bestial hooves

As burning ambition paves the way to perdition
Stocks of merit are so often frittered away
By pompous pride and angry arrogance
By a lack of mercy and filial piety
By lies and insults and scathing sarcasm
And by lascivious pursuits that sully purity
Thus, the fortunes of men forever wax and wane

The wise bear slights with a serene smile
And forever hold onto the five precepts
Even in the face of envy, tempers and temptations
They are well aware of the follies of men

And seek not pomp, power or to lord over and reign
They ask only for peaceful lives of purpose
Of chastity and charity and piety

For they eschew vice and embrace virtue
Their burgeoning stocks of merit bring forth
Ascension to delightful new heights
Far above this dreary and weary world
To be gods and goddesses who glide beyond
The lush heavenly groves atop Meru Peak
And play ever pleasing tunes on divine lutes!

Once they are reborn as men and women
They are bright and beautiful and healthy
Wanting neither wealth nor influence
They prostrate and pray to the proper Dharma
And stroll in blooming blossoming orchards
Enjoying prose and poetry most moving
Amid sweet sounding harps and harpsichords

But, those climbing back to the realm of men
From the plunging depths of punishment
Are servile and must suffer scores of burdens
They toil and moil amid squalor and scarcity
Their previous miserliness manifest as poverty
Their slow wit the fruit of their slanders
And their short lifespans halved by their wrath!

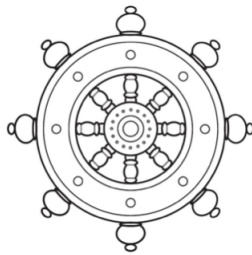
Thus, the Samsara is dismal glooming darkness

Ruled by delusion and defined by pain
A place where souls stumble and tumble
As they stubbornly quest for the phantoms of
Fleeting love and glory, pomp and luxury
And suffer the karmic pains of their sins
Which they garner and gather as they hanker!

Therefore, why linger to burn and turn?
Why not seize the chance to urgently seek
Unsurpassed Bodhi through Amitabha's grace?
Forfeit attachments to the impermanent
Bring forth faith in his Forty Eight Vows
Resolve for rebirth in the Western Buddha-land
By being ever mindful of his noble name!

The Pure Land is resplendent without peer
Aptly lauded as the Land of Ultimate Bliss
From its aurulent soil arises bejeweled trees of
beryl berries, Cameo glass branches, and amber leaves
Surrounded by teal hued rivulets and pristine rivers
Adorned by Pavilions and Palaces most fair
And devoid of even the faintest hint of the fiendish

Thus, chant Amita's Buddha-name with
Faith and Resolve and Fortitude most resolute
Arise in the Lotus Lagoon as brilliant Bodhisattvas
Endowed with the 32 features of eminence
With infinite life and transcendental powers
Forever free from the sufferings of the Samsara!



Amita Buddha

The Light of the Western Land

Of Ultimate Bliss